



Nevada: Providing a Glimpse of Hope and Security in American Democracy

By Edelina Curkic, May 2021

American democracy means engaging citizens in politics and protecting their rights as voters. With legislative efforts to suppress voters, especially in the past year, our democracy is being undermined. The purpose of a democratic system is to engage citizens in the political process and ensure the right to vote without intimidation. Without these components, it is not a democracy. Although bills are being written across the country to push voter suppression, there is hope, as some states are passing legislation that eases voter access and even abolishes disenfranchisement laws, allowing more Americans to take part in our democracy. One of those states is Nevada, which recently passed a voting amendment to the state's constitution. Being proposed first in 2017 and then in 2019, the bill was eventually placed in the 2020 election ballot in hopes that Nevadans would vote *yes*.

Currently, the right to vote is implied but not explicitly granted in the United States' Constitution. Nevada, in particular, took the extra step to include the Voter's Bill of Rights in the state's constitution, providing a clear and explicit list of "guarantees to protect both voters and the integrity of [their] [elections](#)."

The amendment also “provided registers with other constitutional rights” that includes voting without intimidation, providing equal access to the electoral system without discrimination, and [more](#). The bill was first presented by Senator Patricia Spearman in 2017 who argued that it is about “protecting our democracy and the sacred act of voting.” This piece of legislature passed in 2019, with both the Senate and the Assembly unanimously approving it; thus, the amendment was sent to the [ballot in 2020](#).

This did not come with full bipartisanship, however, as there was opposition against putting the bill on a ballot because some argued it would cause a problem as the constitution already includes basic voting rights. But when the question appeared on the ballot on November 3, 2020, 64% of those who voted in Nevada voted *yes* to the question, and the amendment was officially added to [Nevada’s Constitution](#).

Despite many states attempting to either expand the right to vote or diminish it, it is considerably rare for states to amend their Constitutions to explicitly outline citizens’ voting rights. Nevada successfully managed to do that and ease the political process for Nevadans. Not long after the voting amendment passed in Nevada, there is already another piece of legislature being written and proposed by Democrats in Nevada called the Equal Rights Amendment. It proposes that the rights of civilians should not be denied based on “race, color, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, disability, ancestry or [national origin](#).” The language in this bill is a key component in ensuring the rights of every citizen, regardless of their identity and more. As Senator Patricia Spearman said: “We must be brave in protecting the weak, the

downtrodden the oppressed. We must be brave in lifting our fellow Nevadans to a place of justice and [equality](#).” Her statement, itself, is an embodiment of the purpose of the legislation that is proposed.